

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 182553

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION GENEVA

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION BANGKOK RANGOON FROM SECSTATE SEPT 13

QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, TH, BM

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE RE: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON
OPIUM DEAL OFFER TO CONGRESSMAN WOLFF

1. SEPTEMBER 13 WP CARRIED ARTICLE BY JACK ANDERSON ENTITLED "ASIAN GUERRILLAS OFFER OPIUM DEAL". NEW YORK TIMES OF SAME DATE CARRIED FAVORABLE ARTICLE ON GUB ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIONS. TEXTS OF ARTICLES HAVE BEEN SENT ADDRESSEES VIA USIA WIRELESS FILE.
2. ALTHOUGH SUBJECT NOT RAISED AT SEPTEMBER 13 NOON BRIEFING, DEPT MAY RECEIVE INQUIRIES TOMORROW AND BANGKOK PRESS, AT LEAST, PROBABLY WILL PICK UP POST ARTICLE. FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND USE AS APPROPRIATE. (THIS TEXT IS FOLLOWED BY EXPANDED VERSION PREPARED TO BRIEF PRESS MORE FULLY ON BACKGROUND BASIS, IF REQUESTED.)
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PAGE 02 STATE 182553

3. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED PRESS GUIDANCE (SHORT VERSION)

1. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF REPORTED THIS OFFER TO OUR EMBASSY IN BANGKOK WHEN HE WAS THERE IN AUGUST AND THE MATTER WAS

DISCUSSED WITH HIM.

2. WE DO NOT CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL FEASIBLE BECAUSE:

-- THE PEOPLE INVOLVED ARE UNTRUSTWORTHY AND DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO DELIVER ON THEIR PROMISE. ONE OF THEM IS IN A RANGOON JAIL AWAITING TRIAL FOR NARCOTICS AND OTHER CRIMES.

-- THE PROPOSAL WOULD INVOLVE SUPPORTING A REBELLION AGAINST A FRIENDLY SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT. INTERNATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS WOULD BE ENORMOUS.

-- THE PROPOSAL WOULD END GROWING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE US AND BURMA ON NARCOTICS AND WOULD DISRUPT BURMESE EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING GROUPS. (SEE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE, SEPTEMBER 13, PAGE 7 ON INTENSIFYING BURMESE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS). WE BELIEVE OUR ANTI-NARCOTICS OBJECTIVES CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED BY WORKING THROUGH LEGITIMATE AUTHORITIES IN THE AREAS CONCERNED AND THAT OUR EFFORTS BY THIS MEANS ARE SHOWING INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS.

4. PRESS GUIDANCE (EXPANDED VERSION)

1. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF REPORTED THIS OFFER TO OUR EMBASSY IN BANGKOK WHEN HE WAS THERE IN AUGUST.

2. IN DISCUSSION WITH THE EMBASSY IT WAS EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT:

-- THIS IS ONE OF A NUMBER OF SIMILAR PROPOSALS MADE TO AMERICAN AUTHORITIES BY PERSONS REPRESENTING THEMSELVES AS CHANNELS TO VARIOUS DISSIDENT GROUPS IN NORTHERN BURMA.

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PAGE 03 STATE 182553

-- THE PEOPLE INVOLVED HAVE BEEN JUDGED TO BE CON MEN, DISREPUTABLE BROKERS, AND GENERALLY UNRELIABLE PEOPLE WHO COULD NOT DELIVER ON THEIR PROMISES.

-- THERE ARE SERIOUS OBJECTIONS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF PREEMPTIVE OPIUM BUYING IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING IN THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE.

-- CONSIDERATION OF THIS PROPOSAL AND ACCEPTANCE OF IT WOULD HAVE EXTREMELY SERIOUS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES.

3. PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THIS PROPOSAL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

-- IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE THE OFFER ACTUALLY HAVE ENOUGH AUTHORITY IN THE SHAN STATE TO DELIVER THE OPIUM THEY DESCRIBE AND TO PREVENT FURTHER

PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING. THIS IS A CHAOTIC AREA IN WHICH SEVERAL RIVAL INSURGENT GROUPS ARE VYING WITH EACH OTHER AND THE BURMESE AUTHORITIES FOR CONTROL. A DEAL WITH THESE INDIVIDUALS WOULD BY NO MEANS BUY US CONTROL OF THE SHAN STATE AND ITS OPIUM PRODUCTION OR THE COOPERATION OF OTHER GROUPS ENGAGED IN THE LUCRATIVE NARCOTICS BUSINESS.

-- POLITICALLY THE PROPOSITION COULD BE DISASTROUS. THE OFFER INCLUDES A US PROMISE TO HELP THESE TWO INSURGENT GROUPS WIN FOR THE SHAN STATE AND THEMSELVES "AUTONOMY FROM BURMA". THUS WE ARE ASKED TO SUPPORT THEM IN A REBELLION AND VIRTUALLY TO GO TO WAR AGAINST A FRIENDLY SOVEREIGN COUNTRY. EVEN IF WE WERE PREPARED TO DISREGARD THE CONTEMPT FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW AND MORALITY THAT THIS WOULD IMPLY, WE COULD NOT DISREGARD THE FACT THAT IT COULD THREATEN TO INVOLVE US IN AN INSURGENCY SITUATION--AND IN AN AREA VERY CLOSE TO THE PRC BORDER.

-- ANY CONSIDERATION OF THIS OFFER WOULD IMMEDIATELY END COOPERATIVE RELATIONS ON NARCOTICS MATTERS WITH THE GUB, WHICH HAS DURING THE PAST YEAR INCREASED ITS COOPERATION WITH THE US AND THE UN ON NARCOTICS MATTERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 STATE 182553

AND INTENSIFIED ITS OWN EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING BY SUCH GROUPS AS THOSE REPRESENTED BY THE PERSONS WHO APPROACHED CONGRESSMAN WOLFF. IN THIS CONNECTION, SEE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE OF SEPTEMBER 13, AT PAGE 7, BY BERNARD WEINRAUB. NOTE ALSO THAT ONE OF THE SIGNERS OF THE DOCUMENT GIVEN TO WOLFF IS LO HSING-HAN (SPELLED "LAW HSIN-HAN" IN ANDERSON ARTICLE) WHO WAS APPREHENDED IN JULY BY THAI POLICE, TURNED OVER TO BURMESE AUTHORITIES AND NOW AWAITS TRIAL IN BURMA.

-- THE IDEA OF PREEMPTIVE BUYING OF NARCOTICS IN THIS AREA HAS BEEN CONSIDERED CAREFULLY AND REJECTED AS INFEASIBLE FOR VARIOUS REASONS. AMONG THEM ARE THAT POTENTIAL SELLERS ARE, LIKE THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE OFFER TO WOLFF, NOT IN A POSITION TO CONTROL PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING THROUGHOUT THE AREA AND THAT PREEMPTIVE BUYING WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF STIMULATING INCREASED PRODUCTION. IT WOULD IN EFFECT ADD AN ADDITIONAL MARKET AND THUS INCREASE INCENTIVES. THE SITUATION IN THE SHAN STATE IN THIS REGARD IS VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN TURKEY IN THAT OPIUM GROWING AREAS IN TURKEY ARE

UNDER EFFECTIVE TURKISH GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

-- WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE BEST AND THE ONLY FEASIBLE APPROACH TO THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM IN THE SHAN STATE IS THROUGH SUPPORTING BURMESE GOVERNMENT

SUPPRESSIVE EFFORTS AS BEST WE CAN, THROUGH THE INCREASED COOPERATION THAT IS DEVELOPING BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA ON CROSS BORDER NARCOTICS MOVEMENTS AND THROUGH SUPPORT OF THAI EFFORTS TO STEM THE FLOW OF SHAN STATE OPIUM THROUGH THAI TERRITORY.

-- THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE NARCOTICS PROBLEM IS SERIOUS (EVEN THOUGH A RELATIVELY SMALL PROPORTION OF US NARCOTICS COME FROM THAT AREA), BUT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE. THE PROBLEM CAN ONLY BECOME WORSE IF WE ADOPT MEASURES THAT ADD TO THE CHAOS AND TURBULENCE IN THAT AREA WHICH HAS LONG PROVIDED AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH NARCOTICS PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING COULD FLOURISH. END UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 05 STATE 182553

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